

Experts rap, defend CIA evil empire, benevolent force

By JAMES HODGE

A former CIA chief, an ex-KGB agent, a Watergate burglar and an author on international espionage came in out of the cold Sunday night to talk about undercover operations.

Speaking at a Tulane University Direction '84 program, espionage author David Wise characterized CIA operations as rather ominous. He said elected officials need to control the agency to prevent foreign assassinations and domestic spying.

Former CIA Director William Colby said the agency is "not an evil empire." It was founded to be "more ruthless than its enemies," he said, but the agency's abuses "have been few and far between."

Colby said the CIA has been too controlled, that it does not engage in assassinating enemy leaders, although admitting that in Fidel Castro's case it was not "for lack of trying."

He referred to the CIA attempt to have the Mafia poison the Cuban dictator as one of its more stupid miscalculations.

Colby also said he would "have cheerfully carried a bomb into Hitler's bunker."

Add to Hitler, Libya's Moammar Khadafy, said G. Gordon Liddy, convicted Watergate conspirator and former general counsel to Richard Nixon's Committee to Re-Elect the President.

The end sometimes justifies the means when it comes to breaking the law, Liddy said. This is as true in spying as in the case of the husband who goes through a red light to get his pregnant wife to the hospital quicker, he said.

"Spying is the oldest or at least the second-oldest profession," he said. The Bible gives evidence that Moses carried on economic and military spying, he said.

Man spies to determine the capabilities of his enemies and their intentions, he said. The only way to end the business would be to "change the nature of man," he said.

Wise, author of "The Invisible Government," said that spying is neces-

sary, but that it should be controlled to avoid abuses. He said Watergate was a prime example of how it was used for political purposes.

"This is 1984," said Wise, and Americans should beware.

He said a Senate report on assassinations shows the CIA also tried to kill Congo (now Zaire) leader Patrice Lumumba by poisoning his toothbrush.

Colby admitted the CIA had considered "an assassination program" there, but scrapped it.

Liddy backed Colby in downplaying the CIA's intentions to assassinate opposition leaders, asking Wise if he believes the CIA gave "Chairman Andropov his bad cold."

Liddy said the CIA is more of a benevolent force than the KGB. "The difference is that the KGB would throw a little lady into an oncoming train, and the CIA would push her out of the way."

Vladimir Sakharov, a former KGB-turned-CIA agent, said the difference between the two intelligence operations is one of method.

The CIA is a think tank, he said, whereas the KGB spends most of its time setting up communications.

Sakharov, who was at the heart of KGB operations in the Middle East, said his job was largely public relations, "selling the Soviet point of view."

The Soviet agents try to make friends and establish ties, especially in Third World countries.

He said the greatest danger to the United States is the computerization of information. If he were still a KGB agent, he said he would open up a car dealership that would allow him access

to the financial data of hundreds of people.

He would then be in position to take advantage of someone who fell on hard times and may be willing to help the Soviets.

Colby said he thinks the difference between the two agencies is that the CIA has reliable but few sources of information about the Soviets, while the KGB has an abundance of information about the United States, but doesn't know which pieces are correct.

Colby also said he thought Americans have "sobered up from the binge" in the 1970s of being distrustful of the CIA.

Colby confirmed Wise's allegation that the CIA once screened 28 million letters of Americans in violation of federal law, but said the letters were only those coming from the U.S.S.R.

"They weren't your letters to Aunt Minny," he told the audience.

Wise then rebutted Colby's contention that the CIA has operated within the law in the last 10 years.

"How do we know?" Wise said. He said President Reagan has issued an executive order allowing covert domestic operations and has revamped the declassification system so that documents don't automatically become public after a certain period of time.

Wise also said the CIA is involved in wide-spread covert operations around the world, most notably in Nicaragua.

Because it's an election year, Wise said, Reagan has discontinued the use of lie detector tests on federal employees.